

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Theory and Practice

Edited by
AMIYA DEV
SISIR KUMAR DAS

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
SHIMLA

in association with

ALLIED PUBLISHERS

New Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Lucknow
Bangalore Hyderabad Ahmedabad

First published 1989

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Published by the Secretary for

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY

Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla 171 005

in association with

ALLIED PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED

Prarthna Flats, 1st floor, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009

15 J. N. Heredia Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038

3-5-1129 Kachiguda Cross Road, Hyderabad 500 027

Patiala House, 16A Ashok Marg, Lucknow 226 001

5th Main Road, Gandhinagar, Bangalore 560 009

17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 700 072

13/14 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002

751 Mount Road, Madras 600 002

ISBN 81-7023-017-9

Printed in India

by P. K. Ghosh at Eastend Printers

3 Dr Suresh Sarkar Road, Calcutta 700 014

A Theoretical Framework for Influence Study in the Indo-Anglian Context¹

BHALCHANDRA NEMADE

The influence of English on various Indian literatures has been circumstantially described by literary scholars, who generally agree that the nature of this culture-contact was largely textual. However, scant attention is paid to the entire scale of influence mechanism.² The influence of English on Indian languages is invariably linked with a special kind of renaissance in the values of major Indian language communities, giving rise simultaneously and at different phases to various movements—from the political-sociological to the literary-aesthetic. What requires to be emphasized in this context is that linguistic acculturation as a part of culture contact associates itself with a number of psycho-linguistic and socio-linguistic processes, which we would call confrontations. An overall view of linguistic influence suggests that expansion in linguistic systems is a clear index of how society adjusts itself to the new conditions. It is, in plain words, a process of becoming equal to other developing languages. Minute linguistic changes in the various subsystems of language further influence the organization of text structures in literary works. Unfortunately, historical linguistics and descriptive linguistics in India are bogged down in the study of sound changes and microlinguistic categories, forgetting the fact that linguistics is necessarily textual. It treats the whole language, because language is both a semiotic code and an aesthetic code and the boundaries of these codes are socio-cultural phenomena. In contact comparative linguistics, we concentrate on the confrontation of the two linguistic systems—that of English and that of Marathi or any other Indian language. This would follow the study of the con-

frontations of other superstructures like the stylistic systems, aesthetic systems and cultural and historical traditions of the two cultures, as they are inevitably tagged to the linguistic features. The linguistic model thus can be used as a fundamental framework for the study of literary influence, drawing an analogy between the behaviour of a linguistic subsystem under influence and a literary-aesthetic subsystem of the native language under influence.

A framework of the linguistic influence should be able to account for the simultaneous occurrence of several socio-linguistic processes and phenomena. It is not always possible to carry out analysis of all the processes from inside the receiving language. Self-contained contexts exclusively internal to linguistic systems are often insufficient to account for several aspects of linguistic influence. It is for this reason that a multiple approach needs to be adopted. Influence studies are described in a vast scattered literary divergent; yet all the levels of description have to be complementary to one another. Such an approach would preclude attempts at mathematical formation and prevent parasitic tendencies which develop in undue adherence to one method only. Thus the multiple approach would include the following well-defined linguistic disciplines:

1. *Historical-linguistic*: to establish a reconstructed baseline of structural norms that existed prior to the contact with English. A descriptive model of all the different structural elements needs to be reconstructed for the purpose of their comparison with the stylistic features of the period after the contact with English. Select texts taken from eighteenth century Marathi prose and those from the nineteenth century serve as concrete data for detecting the influence of English on Marathi prose.

2. *Socio-linguistic*: to investigate the process that led to borrowing and change in the receiving language.

The medium of the transfer of linguistic features from English to an Indian language is most certainly the bilingual behaviour of the dominated group. There is a general agreement about the fact that bilingualism, whether textual or oral, is the first discernible sign of the beginning of linguistic influence. In a colonial situation some degree of biculturalism is

inevitably associated with bilingualism. However, when the degree of biculturalism increases in proportion to its possible usefulness, puristic resistance, supported by nativistic movements, begins to substitute the borrowed features by indigenous ones. This accounts for the sudden Sanskritization of Marathi during the period of English influence. The indiscriminate substitution of English loans by Sanskrit equivalents has not only damaged the phonaesthetic structure of Marathi, but also destroyed the rhythm of the sentence-structure considerably. Coinage, loan-translations and pidgin features demand contextualization in the receiving language structure.

Several borrowed features, mostly accepted as culture-tags, meet zero resistance in the receiving language. This clearly suggests the psycholinguistic processes of the borrowing community being raised to the level of the dominant culture. Interference of the alien features in the subsystems of the language, from the graphic to the syntactic, characterizes this phase of influence.

Borrowing may be erratic, but the next phase of change is systematic; it regularizes, rejects or retains the borrowings. Several motivational factors are evident in the textual analysis of borrowed English features—need, utility, urge, rhythm, humour, imitation, plagiarism, compulsion, fancy, prestige and so on.

This range of motivations can be very wide and may be explained only in terms of the period style which controls and regulates individual choices. What seems to eliminate finally the 'unwanted' borrowed features is the native speakers' inertia.

3. The third discipline which requires to be brought in is comparative descriptive linguistics. It prepares a model for functional analysis of the linguistic influence established by other methods discussed so far. The baseline, reconstructed for the purpose of comparison with the new features, is constantly referred to at this stage of investigation. Linguistic change may cause modification to one subsystem in order to accommodate a borrowed feature in the same or in a related subsystem. In this process, some of the homogeneous features of the receiving language structure are lost, creating holes in the system. For example, analysis of the graphic subsystem of modern Marathi prose shows that the English punctuation system has almost

destroyed the free and flexible word order of old Marathi prose, although it has gained in logical argumentation by using the comma, semicolon and quotation marks.

At this level, we have to carefully distinguish between (a) change due to borrowing, and (b) change due to internal development or other factors. Suspicious features can be verified by interlingual comparison, i.e. by detecting the sources in the English texts.

4. We have already entered the fourth discipline of literary stylistics, which may be effectively used to analyse literary texts written in various phases of the influence, so as to establish the occurrence of the entire range of borrowed literary-aesthetic categories—stylistic devices, motifs, imagery, literary forms and movements, symbols, and contents such as characters, plots and situations. Strictly speaking, this is the area of comparative literature and we nearly stand at the boundary of the linguistic methodology developed so far. Here the problem of investigation demands a different framework from the one we have adopted, because a purely nativistic viewpoint appears to be subjective and therefore unjust to the dynamics of the acculturation process on the one hand; and on the other, the Western notions of comparative viewpoint inculcate a kind of objectivity which may lead to bogus 'internationalism'. Evaluation of influence in relation to the dominated languages does not exist in comparative literary studies, because such studies are by and large Eurocentric.³ Moreover, the Indian scholars are themselves acculturated individuals, having no firm tradition of respectability in world literature today. Such is the dilemma.

In the long-term colonial type of culture contact, the language of the dominant group becomes the instrument of ethnic superiority. The dominant group use their language as the instrument of spreading their values, and the dominated, being left with no alternative, accept the value systems of the dominant as their own. Dharmananda Kosambi observes that the institutional superstructure in Indian civilization has perfected an efficient mechanism by which any dominant alien value systems are so completely absorbed into the native culture that the more hostile they are to the existing values, the more respectable they become with us.⁴ From the earliest recorded example of the worship of Indra, a Babylonian Kassi

destroyer who made the Indus Brahmins eat dog-flesh, to the present-day adoration of English culture, Kosambi sees a series of influences on India which make any upsurge of native creativity impossible. Even in the Indo-Anglian context, there is no evidence to judge by in primary and secondary sources whether the alien government imposed more English on the dominated Indians or the Indians themselves forced the British rulers to give them more English.

This discussion naturally does not add in any way to our framework, nor does it answer the dilemma we have pointed out. The proper question here should be: How to 'observe' the numerous shifts in the literary-aesthetic norms that have taken place since the advent of the English influence on our literatures? As observer-participants, can we make any statement on the loss of our rich oral traditions that have vanished by the touch of English text-oriented print culture? Jurij M. Lotman and others define the mechanism of culture as 'a system which transforms the outer sphere into the inner one'.⁵ With the tremendous onslaught of the outer sphere on our culture, what are we to transform into? Clearly, therefore, the first need for the influence study of literary texts is to establish a baseline with which to compare the change.

If this beginning is made, our comparatists will discover a local base rather than an international one. Comparative literature must transcend national boundaries, but it must begin within those national boundaries in order to transcend them at all. For example, in the land of Guru Nanak and Kabir and Tukaram we need not be groping after *secularism*, which we cannot even define properly. Having granted that the colonial contact has left India a low-value culture, the only way Indian literature may stand to gain centrality is to discover the great native forms, structures, themes and movements that existed prior to the colonial contact and establish them as *signifiers*. The Sanskrit epics, the collections of tales like the *Kathāsarit-sāgara* and the *Jātaka*, the Bhakti movement, the styles of Mahanubhava prose, the Vachanakaras, Ghalib and numerous folk poets—these have not been substantially brought under comparative literary study for the simple reason that we constantly work inside influence aesthetics, weighing out our literary commodity in foreign measures.

Finally, it may be added that the framework of influence study need not be a closed model. The taxonomic scale of any influence study will range from complete exclusion of foreign norms to complete inclusion of such norms into the native structure. Between the two poles there is a range of varying degrees of inclusion and exclusion. This proves that influences are system-following rather than system-forming. The native culture accepts only those features which it needs for its own growth. The fact that Indian languages, unlike those in the Americas and Ireland, have survived indicates that a new cycle following the period of influence may come into being.

NOTES

1. The framework outlined here is, however, not purely theoretical in conception. It is derived from the author's full-length study of the influence of English on nineteenth century Marathi prose (unpublished), and the conclusions drawn on the basis of the linguistic acculturation of Marathi have constituted the model, which may be applicable *mutatis mutandis* to other Indian languages.
2. See the following studies: Abdul Latif-Sayyid, *The Influence of English Literature on Urdu Literature* (London: Forster Groom, 1924); Priyaranjan Sen, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1932); Hardev Bahri, *Persian Influence on Hindi* (Allahabad: Bharati Press, 1960); Vishvanath Mishra, *Hindi Bhasha aur Sahitya par Angreji Prabhav, 1870-1920* (Dehradun: Sahitya Sadan, 1963); K. M. George, *Western Influence on Malayalam Language and Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1972).
3. Several fragmentary studies of linguistic acculturation may be cited in this context. See, for example, articles by Edward H. Spicer, 'Linguistic Aspects of Yaqui Acculturation', *American Anthropologist*, XLV, 3 (1943), 410-26; Jean Bassett Johnson, 'A Clear Case of Linguistic Acculturation', *American Anthropologist*, XLV, 3 (1943), 427-34; D. D. Lee, 'The Linguistic Aspect of Wintu Acculturation', *American Anthropologist*, XLV, 3 (1943), 435-40; George L. Trager, 'Spanish and English Loanwords in Taos', *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 4 (1944), 144-58; Joseph B. Casagrande, 'Camanche Linguistic Acculturation', I, *IJAL*, XX, 2 (1954), 140-51; II, *IJAL*, XX, 3 (1954), 217-37; Edward P. Dozier, 'Two Examples of Linguistic Acculturation: The Yaqui of Sonora and Arizona and the Tewa of New Mexico', *Language*, XXXII, 1 (1956), 146-57; Janet B. Sawyer, 'Aloofness from Spanish Influence in Texas English', *Word*, 15 (1959), pp. 270-81; Gerald D. Berreman, 'Aleut Reference Group Alienation, Mobility and Acculturation', *American Anthropologist*,

LXVI, 2 (1964), 231-50; and Janet Byron, *Selection among Alternates in Language Standardization: The Case of Albanian* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).

4. See *Hindi Sanskriti ani Ahimsa* (Bombay: Dharmananda Kosambi, 1935).
5. 'Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures (as Applied to Slavic Texts)', in *The Tell-Tale Sign: A Survey of Semiotics*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1975), p. 58.